

“Violence and Public Health”
To the American Academy of Pediatrics
New York City, NY
October 26, 1982

I delivered this speech on the same day that I made the announcement to physicians through the academy about the safety of Tylenol for children.

My introduction to this lecture enabled me to remind the audience that I was one of eight founding members of the surgical section of the Academy and to express my appreciation once again to the Academy for providing a haven and authority aegis for the surgical section when it was composed of a few pediatric surgeons struggling for recognition in the development of the new specialty.

This title on violence is the first given by me as Surgeon General where I began my crusade to have violence considered a public health problem rather than a subject only for law enforcement and jurisprudence. I discussed three major categories of violence: motor vehicle fatalities, suicide, and homicide and then attempted to give a profile of violence to children as well as their backgrounds based on the research of others, but presented to a pediatric audience through the filter of the Surgeon General’s perspective. I also discussed at some length the “Medicalization of Social Problems” and the reluctance of physicians to become involved in their assessment. I also looked at the relationship between the fictional violence that is televised and the violence that takes place in the real world.

(Editor’s note: see editor’s note of proceeding introduction on Violence and Public Health.)

Frequently en route to the venue for a speech, I added or deleted material in ink and so delivered the message. This particular speech shows in italics those things I added en route. Sometimes I thought they were facts I thought belonged in the speech, other times they were homey inclusions having to do with the group I was speaking to or the place in which we were meeting. It gives some idea of both the completeness of the speech before I took off as well as the type of thinking I did on route.

Abused Children
Battered Spouses
Conflict resolution
Cost of Violence
Dimensions of Crime
Family
Motion Pictures & Violence
Motor Vehicle Fatalities
Multidisciplinary Research
Murder
Prevention of Crime
Prevention of Recurrence of Crime

Suicide
Television & Violence
Video Games & Violence

Dorothy Otnow Lewis
Eli Newberger